

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended): Apparatus for effecting a desired geometric change in the annulus of a heart valve and limiting mitral leaflet prolapse, said apparatus comprising:
first and second plication bands, each said plication band comprising:

first and second substantially straight and parallel legs, each having a first end, the first ends of said first and second legs being adapted to pierce heart valve tissue; and

a bridge having first and second ends, the first end of said bridge being connected to said first leg and the second end of said bridge being connected to said second leg, such that the first ends of said first and second legs are separated by a first distance;

said bridge being configured such that when the first ends of said first and second legs have pierced tissue at the first distance, said bridge is deformable so as to cause the first ends of said first and second legs to each move toward the other so as to thereafter be ~~separated by a second, shorter~~ opposed to each other first end-to-first end with a distance of less than the first distance therebetween, whereby said first and

second legs gather together pierced tissue to effect a contraction of the annulus of the heart valve; and

a linking construct having first and second ends and connected proximate a the first end thereof to said first plication band and proximate a the second end thereof to said second plication bands.

2. (Currently Amended): A method for effecting a desired geometric change in the annulus of a heart valve and limiting mitral leaflet prolapse, said method comprising the steps of:

providing apparatus for effecting a ~~contraction~~ contraction in the annulus of the heart valve, the apparatus comprising:

first and second plication bands, each plication band comprising:

first and second substantially straight and parallel legs, each having a first end, the first ends of said first and second legs being adapted to pierce heart valve tissue; and

a bridge having first and second ends, the first end of said bridge being connected to said first leg and the second end of said bridge being connected to said second

leg, such that the first ends of said first and second legs are separated by a first distance;

said bridge being configured such that when the first ends of said first and second legs have pierced tissue at the first distance, said bridge is deformable so as to cause the first ends of said first and second legs each to move toward one another so as to thereafter be separated by a second, shorter distance, whereby said first and second legs gather together pierced tissue to effect the contraction in the annulus of the heart valve; and

a linking construct connected proximate a first end thereof to said first plication band and proximate a second end thereof to said second plication band;

deploying the first plication band in a first portion of tissue; and

deploying the second plication band in a second portion of tissue such that the linking construct extends across a mouth of the valve and draws the first and second portions of tissue together, thereby limiting leaflet prolapse.